

Definition of Fasting

“A Christian’s voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes” (Whitney, pg. 160).

Description of Fasting

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that was practiced in the bible, the early church and is still practiced around the world today.

There are 74 separate references to fasting in the Bible. There's actually more teaching in the New Testament on fasting than there is on repentance and confession

The primary purpose of fasting is to strengthen one’s reliance on Christ.

“Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food. Through it, we learn by experience that God’s word to us is a life substance” (Willard, pg. 166).

“Fasting is not an end in itself; it is a means by which we can worship the Lord and submit ourselves in humility to him” (Towns, pg. 17).

It helps discipline our spirit.

These disciplines train our body and personality to be able to want something and not get it.
Dallas Willard

Fasting transforms us to transform the world.
Dr. Bill Bright

Fasting can be God's catalyst to thrust us into a whole new world.
Don DeWelt

Additional Resources

Foster, Richard. Celebration of Discipline. San Francisco: Harper , 1998.

Whitney, Donald. Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Nav Press, 1991.

Willard, Dallas. The Spirit of the Disciplines. San Francisco: Harper , 1988.

Towns, Elmer. Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1996.

www.dianedew.com/fasting.htm

www.new-life.net/fasting.htm

www.bible.com/answers/afasting.html

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Fasting

**A Brief Biblical and
Practical View of Fasting**

Biblical Fasting

The Use of fasts in the bible

- **The setting apart of leaders.**
Acts 13:3, Acts 14:23
- **Intercession for the people of God.**
Exodus 24:18, Deuteronomy 9:8-9, 12-20, 23-27, Ezra 10:6, Daniel 9:3-4, Joel 2:12-14, 17-18, Jonah 3:5-10
- **Humbling oneself.**
I Kings 21:27-29, Psalms 35:13; 69:10
- **Seeking the Lord and His way.**
Judges 20:26-28, II Chronicles 20:3, Ezra 8:21-23
- **Repentance and confession of sin.**
I Samuel 7:6, I Kings 21:27-29, Ezra 10:6, Nehemiah 1:4-7; 9:1-3, Jeremiah 36:6-10,
- **Receiving healing.**
I Samuel 1:5-11, 18-20, II Samuel 12:15-16, 22-23, Isaiah 58:8, Acts 9:9, 17-19
- **Petitioning God to withhold His judgment.**
Deuteronomy 9:18, 25, Isaiah 58:9
- **Preparation to receive word from God.**
Deuteronomy 9:18, 25, Isaiah 58:9
- **Spiritual deliverance.**
Isaiah 58:6, Mark 9:29 (Matthew 17:21), II Chronicles 20:3
- **Mourning another's death**
II Samuel 1:12; 3:35,
- **Seeking protection.**
Ezra 8:21-23, Esther 4:3; 9:1-3, Daniel 6:18
- **Lacking material provision; in need.**
II Corinthians 11:27

Types of Fasts in the bible

- **Normal fasts - fasting from food**
Genesis 24
- **Absolute fast - fasting from food and liquids**
(Caution: Should not be undertaken over 3 days, and only if you have a clear directive from the Lord and are in good health).
Ezra 10:6, Esther 4:16, Acts 9:9, Acts 27:33
- **Partial fast - fasting from certain foods or liquids**
Daniel 10:3

The Length of Fasts in the bible

- **One night.**
Daniel 6:18
- **One day.**
I Samuel 7:6, II Samuel 1:12; 3:35, Judges 20:26
- **Three days and three nights.**
Esther 4:16, Acts 9:9, 17-19
- **Seven days.**
I Samuel 31:13, II Samuel 12:16-23
- **Fourteen days.**
Acts 27:33-34
- **Twenty-one days.**
Daniel 10:3-13
- **Forty days.**
Moses - Exodus 24:18; 34:28, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, 25-29; 10:10
Elijah - I Kings 19:8
Jesus - Matthew 4:2 (Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2)

How To Fast*

Preparation for Fasting

- A few days before the fast eliminate foods or habits such as nicotine, caffeine, and sugar.
- A couple of days before the fast eliminate or cut down on consuming red meats, milk products, eggs and fatty foods. Nutritional supplements can also be curtailed since they are usually not recommended during a fast.
- Prepare with three or four days of consuming only fruit and vegetable foods. These nourish and slowly detoxify the body so that the actual fasting will be less intense.
- For those who plan an extended fast of multiple days, prepare by doing shorter 1-3 day fasts. People planning these longer fasts, especially inexperienced fasters, should spend a period about equal in length to the planned fast preparing for it. Avoid the foods mentioned above and consume primarily fruits and vegetables and more fluids. This will lead into an easier and more energizing fast.

During the Fast

- During an extended fast, the body goes through a detoxification process for cleansing.
- Expect to experience the following during the first few days of an extended fast: Coating of the tongue, which is an indication of the body's detoxification. It will usually clear up once this stage is over; Hunger, which is most intense in the first few days; Headaches can occur during the detoxification period; and Fatigue.
- Plan times to pray, have moments of light exercise, get fresh air and sunshine, get massages, take baths, clean the house, and perform other tasks you find relaxing. Get plenty of rest.
- Exercising is recommended if there has already been a routine of exercise. More rigorous exercise should be avoided.
- Since the primary purpose of fasting is to develop spiritual discipline and reliance on the Lord, plan frequent times of scripture reading, listening to Christian music and devoted times of prayer.

How to Break an Extended Fast

- When to break an extended fast requires the individual to be in tune with their body. After the detoxification process (3-7 days) there is normally a period of "cruising" where the faster feels as if they can fast forever (Foster, pg. 59). After that period, when energy begins to decline again or there is increased weight loss or deep seated hunger pains, it is time to break the fast.
- Make a gradual transition to a regular diet. Take several days, or half of your total cleansing time, to move back into your diet.
- Simple vegetable meals, salads, or soups can be used to start. Fruit should be eaten alone.
- Well-cooked brown rice or millet is handled well by most people by the second day. From there, progress slowly through grains and vegetables.

* The section "How to Fast" is from Elson M. Haas, M.D., Preventive Medical Center of Marin in San Rafael, California. Any one with further questions should consult the resources on the back of this brochure and their family physician.